

**THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS
RESOLUTION SUPPORTING HEALTHY COMMUNITY DESIGN**

Resolution Summary

Community design has a significant impact on public health. People who live in sprawling communities, for example, typically drive more than those who live in compact, well-planned areas. That increases vehicle emissions that contribute to poor air quality, which is one of the causes of asthma and other respiratory diseases. The absence of sidewalks, heavy traffic and high crime levels provide barriers to increasing the physical activity of residents and contribute to the increased risk for obesity, heart disease and diabetes. More than 50 percent of American adults and more than a third of young people in grades 9-12 do not get enough physical activity. Poor community design decisions may also contribute to: health disparities, decreased water quality, the siting of hazardous materials facilities too close to population centers, and a loss of green space, which is important in fostering a sense of community and lessening the effects of mental fatigue.

Local government officials across the country engage in land use planning, examining zoning restrictions, growth and development policies and community design. These planners can impact the health of residents by providing bike and jogging routes, safe routes to schools, school siting to increase physical activity, walkable neighborhoods, and other design features that take into account public health concerns. They can approve land uses in communities to encourage walking or biking and seek to preserve open space by using compact building designs.

State policymakers can play an important role in influencing local governments to consider health effects in community design. They can implement statewide development strategies to revitalize older neighborhoods that are pedestrian-focused or public transit-oriented, transportation policies that make it more desirable for people to walk or bike, and open space preservation policies. States can also provide the resources necessary to educate state and local officials on the principles of building healthy communities. They can allocate funding for public awareness educational campaigns and training for local health, transportation, and public works officials as well as planners, developers and non-profit partners. And they can encourage and promote collaboration in exploring innovative solutions in the community design process.

One such innovative solution is the Health Impact Assessment (HIA), which the World Health Organization defines as “a combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy, program or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population.” Now being implemented at a growing rate across Europe and by the city of San Francisco, HIAs have the potential to improve public health by bringing to the attention of decision makers the health consequences of their actions.

This resolution seeks to encourage states to support and adopt initiatives that comprehensively, formally and systematically integrate public health considerations into community design to ensure the health of our communities.

Additional Resource Information

“About Healthy Places,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/about.htm>

“Designing and Building Healthy Places,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/>

“Healthy Community Design: Land Use and Smart Growth,” National Conference of State Legislators
<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/enviro/healthyCommunity/landuse.htm>

“Many Pathways From Land Use to Health: Associations between Neighborhood Walkability and Active Transportation, Body Mass Index, and Air Quality,” Journal of the American Planning Association, Vol. 72, No. 1, Winter 2006.
<http://www.planning.org/japa/pdf/JAPAFrank06.pdf>

“Health and Community Design,” Project for Public Spaces
http://www.pps.org/info/placemakingtools/issuepapers/health_community

“Public Health in Land Use Planning and Community Design,” National Association of County and City Health Officials
<http://archive.naccho.org/Documents/Land-Use-Fact-Sheet6-19-03.pdf>

Management Directives

Management Directive #1: Support state efforts to integrate public health considerations into the process of community design.

Management Directive #2: CSG staff will post approved resolution on CSG’s Web site and make available through its regular communication venues at the state and local level to ensure its distribution to the state government and policy community.

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WHEREAS, land use planning and community design have a direct impact on the health of citizens and their quality of life;

WHEREAS, local governments across the country engage in land use planning, including zoning, growth and development policies and community design;

WHEREAS, poor land use and community design decisions may contribute to: health disparities, chronic disease, decreased water quality, loss of green space, inappropriate siting of hazardous materials facilities and increased traffic congestion resulting in decreased air quality and increased pollution emissions, which a lack of public transportation can exacerbate;

WHEREAS, land use planning and community design can incorporate biking, walking and jogging paths, safe walking routes to schools, public transportation and other design features that promote healthy physical activity which reduces obesity and that improve physical and mental health;

WHEREAS, state governments are uniquely positioned to influence, implement and integrate development, revitalization, transportation, and open space strategies that take health benefits into account;

WHEREAS, state governments are able to provide resources for public education and technical training on the principles of healthy communities;

WHEREAS, Health Impact Assessments have the potential to improve public health by bringing to the attention of decision makers, such as members of city councils and zoning commissions, the health consequences of their actions;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that The Council of State Governments encourages states to comprehensively, formally and systematically integrate public health considerations into community design processes;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The Council of State Governments advocates that health and planning agencies ensure early, sustained and active participation for affected community members in all stages of community design decision-making;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The Council of State Governments encourages states to support measures such as the following to create healthy communities and reduce disparities:

- Provide assistance to local public health officials and city planners, developers and non-profit entities to integrate health considerations into decisions regarding land use planning and community design.
- Support educational programs designed to promote social justice and health equity and increase awareness and acceptance within the community of the public health impact of decisions regarding transportation, land use and community design.
- Provide training and technical assistance to local health officials on the scope and uses of the HIA as a voluntary community planning tool. This also includes training or awareness building for the nonpublic health stakeholders who may be an integral part of the process.
- Collaborate with traditional and nontraditional partners to elicit broad based support in developing innovative solutions for incorporating health considerations into land use decisions.

Adopted this 3rd Day of December, 2006 at the
CSG 2006 Annual Trends and Leadership Forum
In Phoenix, Arizona



Governor Jim Douglas
2006 CSG President



Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin
2006 CSG Chair